CALDERDALE COLLEGE
AUDIT COMMITTEE MEETING

Minutes of the Meeting held on 9 October 2025, held in the Board room, C Floor and via MS Teams at 5.00pm.

Present:

Safia Kauser	External Governor
Richard Laycock	External Governor
Becky McIntyre	External Governor
Martyn Stone	External Governor (Chair)

In Attendance:

Andrew Harrison	Vice Principal – Corporate Services
Scott McCready	WBG
Ryan Falls	Cooper Parry
Jane Taylor-Holmes	Clerk

Agenda: There were no items of other business.

Min. No	Minutes	Action
1 2	**AC/25/133 - Apologies for absence** Apologies were received from Greg Scully, External Governor. Committee members welcomed new member; Becky McIntyre, External Member.	
3	**AC/25/134 – Confirmation of eligibility, quorum and declarations of interest** No notice had been received of any member becoming ineligible to hold office. There were no declarations of interest in agenda items. The meeting was quorate.	
4 5	**Appointment of Chair & Vice Chair – 2025/26** **Resolved –** Mr M Stone was appointed as Chair of the Committee for 2025/26.	

Min. No	Minutes	Action
	Resolved – Mr R Laycock was appointed as Vice Chair of the Committee for 2025/26.	
	AC/25/135 – Minutes of previous meeting	
6	Mr A Harrison, Vice Principal -Corporate Services explained that the item in yellow in paragraph 60 had been confirmed; £212,000 was the correct figure.	
7	**Resolved -** The Audit Committee minutes of the meeting held on 26 June 2025 were approved as a true and accurate record.	
	AC/25/136 – Matters Arising	
8	Committee members reviewed the matters arising matrix and the comments made in relation to progress.	
9	Mrs Taylor-Holmes explained in relation to Audit Committee membership; Mrs McIntyre had now joined the Committee. Work would continue within the Search and Governance Committee to ensure that Committee memberships were reviewed.	
10	All further matters arising from previous meetings were completed, for completion at a future meeting date or on the agenda for discussion.	
	AC/25/137 – Vice Principal Report	
11	Mr Harrison provided the Vice Principal's Report, which provided a summary of key operational and compliance matters relevant to the Audit Committee's remit.	
12	Accuracy of Funding Data; A summary of the 2024–25 academic year funding data returns was provided. Of the 13 scheduled returns due, 13 had been submitted on time. The RO4 return, a key submission for 2025–26, was upcoming. The College continued to maintain rigorous data accuracy practices, including detailed reviews using PD SATs (Provider Data Self-Assessment Toolkit). The HESES return and ESFA workforce survey were also submitted accurately and on time.	
13	Fraud, Irregularity, and Financial Regulations; There had been no reported incidents of fraud or breaches of financial regulations. A minor issue arose when a private sector partner gifted bottles of wine to staff. These were declared	

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	appropriately, and most had been donated back to the College for future events.	
14	Business Continuity and IT Infrastructure; The IT team was upgrading the tape backup system to improve disaster recovery capabilities. Mr Harrison explained that offline tape backups remained a critical safeguard against cyber threats. Additionally, the College was enhancing physical network infrastructure, including laying new fibre optic cabling between the buildings to eliminate single points of failure. Concerns about potential rodent damage to fibre cables were noted, and resilience measures had been implemented.	
15	Estates Planning; Mr Harrison explained that, as had previously been discussed with Governors, the estates master planning exercise had been undertaken. Concerns had been raised about safety on Francis Street, the road running through between the two buildings. In response to the newly enacted Martyn's Law, the College was engaging with the local council to explore road closures or enhanced physical security measures (e.g., bollards) to mitigate risks from potential vehicle-based threats.	
16	Health and Safety; Recent updates included: • The safe removal of low-grade asbestos discovered in a business support area. • A contractor incident involving a fall from a ladder which prompted a review of contractor management procedures. • In response to the question raised at the previous Audit Committee - A review of first aider distribution revealed 39 trained staff, with 31 on the main campus and others spread across satellite centres. A review of responsiveness and coverage is underway.	
17	Learner Work Experience; The College continued to send learners on industrial placements, ensuring employer compliance with safety benchmarks based on Gatsby Benchmark 6. In response to a question around the If employers fail to meet these standards, learners are not placed.	
18	Committee members asked what happened if employers do not meet the benchmark requirements. Mr Harrison confirmed that in that case, learners were not placed in such settings.	
19	ESFA Funding Audit: The College had concluded its ESFA funding audit. A previous audit identified £104,000 in errors	

Min. No	Minutes	Action
	related to apprentice withdrawals and pricing issues. The college had provisioned £212,000 and would repay the identified amount in November, releasing the remaining funds.	
20	External Audit Update: Mr Harrison explained that CavanaghKelly, the appointed external auditor, had been acquired by Cooper Parry. Mr R Falls, Cooper Parry assured the Committee that service continuity would be maintained, with no impact on the audit timetable. Cooper Parry's broader experience with over 150 FE colleges and MATs was expected to enhance sector insight.	
21	Mr Laycock asked whether Cooper Parry would be required to conduct additional technical reviews. Mr Falls confirmed that internal review processes remain unchanged. Mr Laycock also queried potential timetable impacts. Mr Falls confirmed no delays were expected.	
22	Mr M Stone, External Governor (Chair) asked about the significance of the FE sector to Cooper Parry. Mr Falls commented that education remained a strategic growth area for the firm.	
23	**Resolved:** Committee members received the updates within the Vice Principal report.	
	AC/25/138 – Other External Assurance Reports	
24	Mr Harrison presented the other External Assurance Reports report.	
25	Committee members noted the progress in relation to the Apprenticeship hub.	
26	Mr Harrison referred Committee members to the letter confirming the Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF) payments had been fully assured in relation to payments made during the financial year ending 31 March 2025.	
27	Mr Harrison confirmed that the confirmation certificate had now been received confirming payment made in relation to the Turning scheme.	
28	**Resolved:** Committee members received the report and noted the updates.	
	AC/25/139 – Health and Safety Update	

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29	Mr Harrison presented the Health and Safety Annual Report for 2024–25, alongside the Development Plan for 2025–26. The report reflected significant progress in embedding a positive health and safety culture across the College, following recommendations from the external review by WorkNest.	
30	Mr Harrison referred to key developments and progress made during 2024/25 as follows;	
31	Cultural Shift: The College had made notable strides in embedding health and safety practices within curriculum areas, particularly workshops, through increased awareness and training for curriculum managers and staff.	
32	Policy Updates: The Health and Safety Policy had been reviewed and updated with support from WorkNest. Associated procedures, including home visits and Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs), were also improved and communicated.	
33	Staff Engagement: The Health and Safety Staff Committee had been reinstated and met regularly, with representation from staff, unions, and the student union.	
34	Site Visits: A programme of announced and unannounced workplace visits ad been conducted by senior leaders and the lead governor, resulting in action plans where necessary.	
35	Incident Management: Three significant incidents were reported and followed up with lessons learned. Fire risk assessments were completed across all sites.	
36	Training: Extensive staff training was delivered, including first aid (1-day and 3-day responder courses), evacuation chair usage, and guest speaker sessions for students.	
37	Documentation Improvements: Risk assessment templates were refined, and efforts were made to digitise documentation for easier access and updates.	
38	Development Plan for 2025–26 Mr Harrison explained that the plan focused on • Further embedding health and safety culture. • Reviewing fire evacuation and lockdown procedures. • Launching a campaign to improve near-miss reporting. • Auditing signage to address "sign blindness."	

Min. No	Minutes	Action
	• Enhancing occupational health procedures. • Exploring sector-wide best practices despite the loss of the AoC health and safety network.	
39	Mr Laycock queried the absence of measurable KPIs in the report and suggested including metrics such as RIDDOR incidents and near misses. He proposed developing a set of KPIs for future reporting.	
40	Committee members acknowledged the value of KPIs but noted the challenge of setting targets in terms of an 'acceptable' level of harm and interpreting near-miss data. It was suggested that the College position again sector benchmarks could be an option to consider.	
41	Ms S Kauser, External Governor raised the issue of measuring cultural embedding, referencing WorkNest's earlier concerns. She asked how the College would know when health and safety was truly embedded. Mr Harrison confirmed that there could be some measures such as that curriculum managers now sign off risk assessments and were actively involved in site visits, indicating improved engagement. Mr Harrison agreed to explore ways to measure cultural embedding.	**Action: Mr Harrison March 2026**
42	Mrs McIntyre asked how the team identified emerging risks, particularly in occupational health and mental wellbeing. Mr Harrison explained that while there was no formal sub-risk register in relation to Health and Safety, the team monitors sector developments through networks and updates from WorkNest.	
43	**Resolved:** Committee members received the Health and Safety update.	
44	**Resolved:** Committee members approved the Annual Health and Safety Report 2024/25 and Development Plan 2025/26.	
	AC/25/140 – Audit Recommendations and Actions	
45	Mr Harrison provided an overview of progress towards the agreed actions arising from Internal and other Audit reports.	
46	The tracker showed that of the 23 recommendations, 21 had been completed and two were due to be completed but were passed their due date but actively being progressed. The two outstanding recommendations were discussed.	

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47	Business Continuity and Recovery Testing; The recommendation called for a formal, consolidated schedule for end-to-end continuity and recovery testing. Mr Harrison explained that while various tests were conducted and documented, they are currently recorded in separate formats. The delay is attributed to the presentation and consolidation of existing documentation into a single schedule, rather than a lack of testing activity.	
48	Mr Stone asked about the continuity and recovery testing in IT and the comment that the recommendations had not yet been implemented; Mr Stone asked if there would be a full recovery test undertaken.	
49	Mr Harrison confirmed that testing was completed on each individual system independently.	
50	Committee members queried the nature of the delay, asking whether it was due to a lack of clarity on what to test or simply an administrative issue.	
51	Mr Harrison confirmed it was a matter of presentation, not substance. It was noted that the revised completion date was set for the end of October 2025.	
52	Internal Review of Apprenticeship Records; The recommendation involved conducting a formal internal review of apprenticeship sample records. Mr Harrison explained that a designated staff member was acting as the Apprenticeship Champion, overseeing ongoing improvements in record-keeping.	
53	It was noted that a comprehensive internal review was scheduled for completion by the end of the calendar year.	
54	**Resolved:** The Committee noted the progress in relation to Audit recommendations.	
	AC/25/141 - Internal Audit reports	
55	The Committee received the internal audit report covering Artificial Intelligence which focused on the college's governance, policy, and operational arrangements for the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) across teaching, learning, and administrative functions.	

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56	Mr S McCready, WBG confirmed that the report provided a strong overall conclusion. There was one low grade recommendation around the consideration of establishing clearer internal processes to support the sharing of AI specific knowledge guidance and good practice across the teams There were also two observations for consideration around closer collaboration and the enhancement of staff training. In relation to good practice points, Mr McCready explained that there were multiple examples of effective and ethical AI integration.	
57	Mr McCready explained that the review covered; Internal governance structures related to AI. Policies and protective systems in place. Academic integrity safeguards. Strategic alignment with digital transformation initiatives.	
58	As this was the first Internal Audit report received from WBG following their appointment, Mr McCready explained that the audit report followed a structured format, including: Purpose and scope, summary of existing arrangements, testing against objectives, overall conclusion and recommendations and good practice points and benchmarking.	
59	Mr McCready provided a summary of key findings, including that the College had implemented a comprehensive governance framework for AI, aligned with its Digital Transformation and Innovation Strategy launched in March 2024, an AI Action Tracker was in place to monitor progress, policies uphold academic integrity and promote ethical, age-appropriate, and responsible use of AI and staff were encouraged to explore AI tools in teaching and learning, with oversight from the Digital Transformation and Innovation Team and Quality Management.	
60	There were a number of good practice points highlighted in the report including that AI use was aligned with awarding body requirements, there were strategic risk management support oversight of AI usage, AI was embedded within the college's digital strategy and staff were actively engaged in AI exploration and evaluation.	
61	In response to a question from Committee members, Mr McCready confirmed that the number and grading of recommendations were consistent with sector norms and that the College compared favourably with peer institutions in terms of AI governance maturity.	

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62	Mr McCready provided additional information in relation to recommendations and observations as follows. Medium-Priority Recommendation: To establish a more formal mechanism for sharing insights between HE and FE teams to enhance internal knowledge exchange. Observation 1: While a strong cyber awareness programme was in place, the audit suggested enhancing training content to prepare staff for AI-driven cyber threats. Observation 2: As AI-driven software features became more common, increased collaboration between IT and the Digital Transformation Team was recommended to strengthen approval processes.	
63	Mrs McIntyre asked about the Management responses and what 'success' would look like in this area. Mr Harrison explained that the report had been produced very promptly following the review work and Management would require some more time to digest and plan how the responses would be achieved. This would be further reported to the Committee.	**Action: Mr Harrison March 2026**
64	There was a Committee discussion around the review and comparison of report grading structure from the previous Internal Audit Provider and WBG. Mr McCready explained that the previous Internal Audit provider provided three assurance gradings as did WBG, this would be considered as part of the follow up work to be undertaken.	
65	Mr Stone commented that he found the Internal Audit report well written and clear however, the executive summary was very long. Mr McCready agreed to feedback the comments to the team at WBG.	
66	**Resolved –** Committee members received the Internal Audit report.	
	AC/25/142 – Whistleblowing, Fraud and Irregularity Annual Report 2024/25	
67	Mrs Taylor-Holmes presented the Annual Report 2024/25, this was to be recommended to the Board. The report confirmed the Audit Committee responsibility in this area.	
68	In line with recommended amendment at the meeting in November 2023, the report included reference to the training provided to staff. Mrs Taylor-Holmes referred to the increase in the number of staff trained and commented that there had been no incidents of whistleblowing, fraud or irregularity in	

Min. No	Minutes	Action
	the period. The item reported to the June 2025 Committee meeting in relation to the minor breach of Financial Regulations was noted.	
69	**Resolved –** Committee members approved the report and recommended it to the Corporation for approval.	
	AC/25/143 Risk Management **Risk Management Annual Report 2024/25**	
70	Mr Harrison presented the Risk Management Annual Report 2024/25.	
71	Mr Harrison confirmed that the report described what had been done in relation to risk in the year and included the identification of key risks and cross referred back to internal audit report opinion of reasonable assurance. The report provided a summary of the year to consider.	
72	It was noted that there were a number of date changes to be included in sections 1.3, 2.1 and 4, these would be updated prior to submission to the Board (in December with the Audit Committee Annual Report)	**Action: Mr Harrison December 2025**
73	Annual Report 2024/25 – Mr Harrison provided key highlights and commented that the year began with three high-level (red) risks: • Failure to attract and retain suitably skilled and motivated staff. • Major IT failure. • Failure to comply with funding body requirements.	
74	By year-end, only the first remained a red risk, with the others successfully mitigated.	
75	The College had introduced enhancements to its risk management process, including a heat map to visualise residual risks and risk appetite and improved tracking of progress and actions.	
76	Five new risks were added during the year in response to emerging issues, including: • Artificial Intelligence. • Ofsted inspection challenges. • Accommodation pressures for 16–19 learners. • Combined authority approaches.	

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	• Threat of industrial action.	
78	The internal audit provider during 2024/25 (ICCA) offered reasonable assurance on the College's risk management processes, though governance was excluded from their opinion. The Committee reaffirmed confidence in the college's governance and internal control systems.	
79	Mr Laycock asked whether the College intended to further develop its approach to risk appetite. Mr Harrison clarified that the focus was on improving how risk appetite was used in decision-making, rather than refining the framework itself.	
80	Mr Laycock also questioned the continued classification of staff recruitment and retention as a high risk, given that the College's pay awards are in line with sector norms and that the challenges were not universal within the College but related to a number of areas.	
81	Mr Harrison explained that recruitment challenges persisted across various roles, including engineering, administration and management. There were sector-wide salary disparities (e.g., English and maths teachers earning up to £10,000 less than in schools) contribute to the risk, Mr Harrison commented that metrics on turnover and vacancies were available (and considered by the Finance and Resources Committee) and could be shared with the Committee.	
82	It was noted that the risk remained high across the FE sector and was reflected on most college registers. It was agreed that this could be an area for a deeper review with the Finance and Resources Committee at the December Joint meeting.	**Action: Mr Harrison December 2025**
83	Mrs McIntrye raised a broader question about embedding risk management in decision-making. Mr Harrison confirmed that risk was a standing item at senior leadership team meetings. Managers were involved in updating the register and identifying risks and the aim was to devolve ownership of the register to departments over time.	
84	**Resolved –** Committee members approved the Annual Risk Management Report 2024/25.	
	• **Risk Register**	

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85	Mr Harrison explained that this was the first look at full risk register in the year.	
86	The risk register provided a review of the current risks and included an update on mitigation actions, and the heat map was at the front of the risk register.	
87	The Committee reviewed proposed updates to the risk register for the upcoming year. Key changes included;	
88	• New Risk – Ofsted Framework Implementation; A risk was proposed concerning the potential for inconsistent and unfair delivery of the new Ofsted framework. The committee noted the difficulty in mitigating this risk, especially as pilot colleges are bound by non-disclosure agreements. • Updated Risk – Accommodation for 16–18 Learners. The risk had been rephrased to reflect limited availability of first-choice courses due to space constraints, rather than turning learners away. Mr Harrison explained that the College was actively pursuing estate master planning to address this. • New Risk – Capital Project Delivery; A specific risk had been added for the £1.66 million capital project involving the FA new sports pitches. The risk focused on logistical challenges, including displacement of students and commercial clients. • Ongoing Risk – Staff Recruitment and Retention. This remained a high-priority risk, with additional detail provided on recruitment difficulties.	
89	Committee members reiterated the importance of departmental ownership of the register and encouraged continued progress toward devolving responsibility. Committee members also acknowledged the value of embedding risk management more deeply and avoiding a perception that the register was solely maintained by one individual.	
90	**Resolved;** Committee members approved the items on the risk register.	
	AC/25/144 – Teachers Pension submission	
91	Mr Harrison presented the Teachers' Pension submission and confirmed that this was a piece of Audit work undertaken	

Min. No	Minutes	Action
	providing assurance that all contributions due had been correctly paid to the Teachers Pension scheme.	
92	Mr Harrison confirmed that Cooper Parry had undertaken the review and provided a copy of the report.	
93	**Resolved:** Committee members noted the final report and the amended Teacher' Pension end of year Certificate for the Year Ended 31 March 2025 which was submitted by the deadline (last working day in September.)	
	AC/25/145 – Schedule of Policies considered by the Board and its Committees and Annual Report	
94	Mrs Taylor-Holmes presented the report and explained that this referenced Policies which were considered by the Board and the Committees.	
95	Mrs Taylor-Holmes explained that the new Policies were included within the report.	
96	It was noted that all Policies had been considered in a timely manner with dates of next review being monitored.	
97	**Resolved –** Committee members received the report.	
	AC/25/146 – Audit Committee Annual Report	
98	Mrs Taylor-Holmes presented the Audit Committee Annual Report 2024/25.	
99	It was noted that the sections in yellow were subject to the outcome of discussions held at the meeting and would be updated as required; it was confirmed that there were no amendments required.	
100	It was noted that the sections in red were for confirmation from Mr Falls, Cooper Parry following the completion of the Annual Financial Statements.	
101	It was noted that assurance around governance had not been included in the internal audit annual report and therefore section 7 had been expanded to reference the progress made in relation to the Governance Improvement Plan.	
102	It was noted that WBG included an element of governance review in all internal audits and therefore there would be an	

Min. No	Minutes	Action
	assessment of governance in their Annual Internal Audit report for 2025/26.	
103	**Resolved:** Subject to the update and inclusion of the items in relation to the Annual Financial Statements, the Annual report was recommended to the Board in December 2025.	
	Committee Terms of Reference	
104	Mrs Taylor-Holmes explained that there had been minor amendments suggested to the Terms of Reference in relation to the removal of the ESFA and replacement with DfE and the removal of the Post-16 Audit Code of Practice which had been replaced by the Framework for auditors and reporting accountants of colleges and the Financial Handbook.	
105	**Resolved:** Committee members approved the Terms of Reference and recommended the Terms of Reference to the Corporation.	
	AC/25/147 – Committee Self-Evaluation	
106	Mrs Taylor-Holmes presented the Committee self- evaluation and referred Committee members to the assessment against the performance of the Committee during 2024/25. It was agreed that all responsibilities of the Terms of Reference had been discharged.	
107	It was noted that there would continue to be a focus on Audit Committee membership over the coming months due to a number of changes on the Committee.	**Action: Search & Governance Committee January 2026**
108	**Resolved:** Committee members approved the Committee Self-Evaluation and the Schedule of Business.	
	AC/25/148 - Items to be reported to the Board	
109	Alert the Board;	
110	Assure the Board; Items reported within the Vice Principal's report were progressing well External assurance had been received in the form of LSIF letter, confirmation of Turing scheme spend, Internal Audit with a strong overall conclusion in relation to Artificial intelligence with one minor recommendation.	

Min. No	Minutes	Action
	Health and Safety update / Annual Report 2024/25 and Development Plan 2025/26 had been reviewed – Work Nest would be attending the March 2026 meeting to provide feedback on progress made. Audit recommendations progress was good; the two outstanding recommendations which were beyond original completion date were reviewed. No incidents of Whistleblowing, Fraud and irregularity to report – Annual Report recommended to Board. Risk Management: The updated Risk Register was reviewed and approved for onward presentation to the Board; there would be a focus on the outstanding red risk in relation to staff retention at the December Joint Audit and Finance and Resources Committee meeting. Received the Risk Management Annual Report 2024/25. All policies on the schedule of Policies for the Board and Committee had been considered in a timely manner with review dates scheduled. Teacher Pension submission had been completed by Cooper Parry and submitted within the timescale.	
111	Action for the Board to take; • Approve the Committee Terms of Reference • Receive the Whistleblowing, Fraud and irregularity Annual Report • Receive the Audit Committee Annual Report – December 2025 (including the Risk Management Annual Report) • Receive the Risk Register	
	AC/25/149 – Dates of Future Meetings	
112	Joint meeting with Finance & Resources Committee – 1 December 2025 – 5.00pm; MS Teams 26 March 2026 – MS Teams 18 June 2026 – MS Teams	
	AC/25/150 - Meeting in the absence of management	
113	Mr Harrison left the meeting at this point.	
114	Mr Falls and Mr McCready confirmed that they had received good support and engagement from the Management and staff in relation to the recent internal audit report and the commencement of the field work in relation to the external audit process.	

Min. No	Minutes	Action
115	There was full co-operation reported, and both commented on the engagement of the Audit Committee and the challenge and support exhibited in the meetings.	

Approved as a true and accurate record at the Audit Committee meeting held on 26 March 2026